DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 233 CE 052 997

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TITLE Equal Opportunities and Vocational Training. The Problems of Evaluation. CEDEFOP Flash 2/89.
INSTITUTION European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Berlin (West Germany).
PUB DATE Jun 89
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
JOURNAL CIT CEDEFOP Flash; n2 Jun 1989

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Females; Foreign Countries; *Job Training; Postsecondary Education; *Program Evaluation; Research Methodology; *Vocational Education; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS *European Economic Community

ABSTRACT

The educational authorities of the Member States of the European Economic Community have begun to study the evaluation of vocational training programs. The study first will probe two strategic questions: (1) evaluation--to what end and by whom should evaluation be made?; and (2) what should be evaluated? The first program slated to be evaluated is training for women. The initial studies will open up a new field of work on evaluation in which individual cases will be studied within a general context. A preliminary finding in the study of women's training is that mathematical techniques have been only partially applied to evaluation techniques. Many questions can be posed in the area of training for women and used for evaluation of other areas. (A guide for the design of a vocational training evaluation is included in this report.) (KC)

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evaluation was then requested to analyse the answers to the questionnaire and the discussions of the conference. This institute applied a theoretical evaluation matrix. At the end of the exercise, the matrix was modified to give more consideration to the different components of the problem of equal opportunities. We will present this matrix later.

Parallel to this survey which is a specific case study, the evaluation of in-company training has also been the subject of a separate study whose results will be available in 1990. Some twenty companies participated in this operation.

3. In addition to this, given the growing interest in the question of evaluation within the context of training linked to territorial development processes, the Centre has recently embarked on 24 case studies spread over a dozen regions of the Community. Here too, the results are expected in 1990.

In both the projects CEDEFOP, like the majority of its partners collaborating in these studies, views the issue from the perspective of change. And change, for the Centre, means improvement, development of vocational training. Inspection or supervision is not, under any circumstance, the aim of the exercise. As Jean AUBEGNY said in two concise statements, what is involved is "not to give account but to take account" and to "create effective conditions for change" (in "The Pitfalls of Evaluation").

It would also be useful to underline right from the outset that CEDEFOP, like all modern evaluation specialists, views the issue in its multidimensionality. The results of scientific analyses modelled on the experimental sciences, cannot as such cover the entire situation. Other approaches have to be developed.

"Researcher/practitioner", this could be the term given to the profile of CEDEFOP's partners involved in the current studies on evaluation. This highlights another aspect of a dynamic evaluation concept: it is a dimension of the practical implementation of vocational training.

4. In this issue of Flash we will present the first studies undertaken within the project "Equal opportunities and vocational training" by following the matrix mentioned above. We will comment on some points. In any evaluation two sets of questions arise: evaluation by whom and to what end; evaluation, how.

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I - STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

1. Evaluation, to what end?

CEDEFOP's questionnaire was addressed to practitioners/researchers providing training for women alone. In the answers to the question whether they know what use is made of the results of the evaluations carried out, the interviewed persons said that they sent the conclusions of their evaluations to national and Community bodies which had commissioned the evaluation; they said that they had no idea of what happened to these conclusions. These persons think that their reports, extensively documented, are not utilized properly; they wonder what type of documents they should send in order to hold the attention of the users of these conclusions. In this connection a reference was even made to an "evaluation of the decision-makers"!

The hazards in the give-and-take of information are many. Evaluation has not yet become the dialectic process between those commissioning it, the providers of training, and the evaluators, which it should be if it is to lead to change. One should react against a type of "ghetto" operation because, in the case of training undertaken as "experimental pilot projects", precisely in order to test the hypothesis of change, the question "what happens to the results of the evaluation" acquires a great strategic significance. Evaluations should lead to the introduction of other methods or point out improvements needed in existing methods; they should influence the political decisions taken in this field. Interaction between all the parties concerned is, in the present state of affairs, still too weak or non-existent.

Two remarks should be made in connection with this highly relevant question of the utilization of evaluation results:

- the providers of training for women could incorporate the goal of evaluation in a follow-up logic instead of a development logic. The reason for this is that, in many cases of training for women, the staff of the programmes have a non-permanent status, they are often recruited for a limited period of time because of sporadic funding. In other words, the permanent or non-permanent status of the training programme has an impact which should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, other factors, not

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necessarily specific to training programmes for women, could also induce the providers of training to try and convince their funding sources of the quality and the usefulness of their activities. These factors include: institutional re-structuring - as in the case of regionalization - with all the political and social stakes involved and budgetary restrictions. In other words, a competitive situation could arise between the numerous bodies providing a "non-regulated" form of training.

- for the trainees themselves evaluation - control of acquired knowledge - has an immediate significance. It takes concrete form in the acquisition of a certificate. This document, when it exists, enables them to present themselves with self-assurance to local employers. Certainly the certificate is valuable, but it does not attest more than a part of the acquired knowledge. If they have been appropriately trained, the evaluators of training can also appreciate the other qualities which training has developed in women: creative capabilities and social skills, elements as important for their "employability" as those attested in the certificate.

There is a lack of diversified and appropriate criteria for the evaluation of training for women. In its study on in-company training CEDEFOP intends to broaden the range and the suitability of precisely these criteria.

2. Whom to ask for an evaluation?

Another complex question is "Whom to ask for an evaluation of the training programmes".

The International Labour Office (ILO) presents an interesting alternative. ILO addresses the request for evaluation to itself. Within its organization there is an "evaluation" cell whose tasks are diverse but which all have the aim of making full use of the programmes implemented and financed by ILO: prevent duplication and the repetition of errors, improve contents, strategies and methods in the future.

In the case of national agencies such as ONEM in Belgium, AFPA in France, BIBB in the Federal Republic of Germany, INEM in Spain and others, there is one person or team in charge of evaluation questions. However, their mode of functioning, the nature of their links with training providers and the evaluators in the field still have to be clarified.

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One particular case was observed during the survey: an association which provided training for women had entrusted the evaluation of its activities to a university team. It is felt that more objectivity and integrity are ensured if the evaluation is done by an outside body. In practice however, the sole fact of involving an outside agency does not give evaluation this characteristic of objectivity; it is necessary in each case to examine in detail both the material which has been evaluated and the formal and informal links which the evaluators have with the evaluated training courses and their organizers on the one hand, and with those commissioning the evaluation on the other.

In the case of training for women (given by women in most cases) which is our subject here, another aspect of the overall problem stands out, namely, the involvement of the evaluators in the problems specific to this target group, their subjectivity vis-à-vis this issue.

In other words, the occupational profile of the evaluator is a complex matter. It implies expertise in various fields: the segment of the labour market for which the training prepares the trainees, the corporate world of companies and firms, and the institutional and functional universe of education and training. The act of evaluating is a complex function which is undertaken on the basis of multiple interactions and with a number of partners. A great deal of objectivity is required to make a synthesis of all this subjectivity, and a feeling for dialogue and the ability to listen are also required. No one can become an evaluator by improvising. Evaluators have to be trained.

Through its work with practitioner/researchers and evaluation experts, the Centre is trying to establish, a priori, a list of efficiency indices, on the one hand in terms of promotion of women within the "Equal opportunities and vocational training" project and on the other hand, in terms of the economic repercussions of its activities under the heading "Regional development and vocational training". It also tries to test the coherence of the evaluation method in relation to the situation to which it is applied. If it can attain these two objectives, the Centre will be in a position to present some reference vocational training programmes which are worthy of receiving financial support and being reproduced in part or in full.

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II - PRACTICAL QUESTIONS: EVALUATE WHAT?

There is much to be evaluated (see following matrix). Let us take a look at two aspects because of their relevance for women: the problem categories and the objectives.

1. The problem categories

Obviously, the issue of equal opportunity is at the origin of the schemes; it is the reason why training for women alone is envisaged. However, once this has been said, this aspect unfortunately does not hold the attention of the evaluators, and the "label" of equality covers various forms of reality.
Let us take the example of a long-term training programme in the Federal Republic of Germany for which the reasons given were economic factors linked to the crisis, the probable shortage of specialized workers and the unemployment rate of young girls. In 1977, the year the programme was set up, the situation on the market for apprenticeship training places was catastrophic because of economic stagnation and the arrival on the market for demographic reasons of a large wave of young people. Girls were particularly affected. Male occupations were opened to young girls for the following reasons:

* there were (still) vacant apprenticeship training places in these occupations;
* since the 1970s the feminist movement had become stronger and demanded, among other things, equal occupational opportunities for women;
* a shortage of specialized workers was forecast; it was thus necessary to make women interested in occupations with a "high tech" content.

France represents another case in point: it is true that the stimulus first came from the State which resolutely accepted and applied the Community directives on equal opportunity, but the companies developed training courses for their employees and their workers mainly to cope with changes and restructuring.

However, these initial situations have not been analysed in depth. The original objectives evolved on their own in the course of the development of training which could extend over several years. Furthermore, the situation on the labour market also changed during this period.

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Thus, a multitude of difficulties for a posteriori analysis arose because of the lack of a priori clarity, plus the difficulty of keeping up with a complex and continuously evolving situation. This is not only found in initiatives reserved for women.

2. The objectives

The national reports which, as we recall, are written by training providers are full of descriptions of the objectives assigned to training. There we find that the "hard core" of evaluation as it is practised consists of comparing the results obtained at the end of the course to the objectives fixed at the beginning mostly in terms of employment and professional progress. It is the teams of training providers who can best identify the needs of the target group: professional "de-compartmentalization", technical proficiency, financial know-how, a professional identity.

At the level of and within the teaching teams, growing attention is being paid to the situation of women: the need to identify and remove barriers to their training, to take into consideration their dual obligations in the household and at work, to approach future employers on their behalf, to adopt methods which can generate motivation, commitment, assumption of responsibility, to modify along non-sexist lines the instruments for the recruitment of trainees and recognition of their acquired skills, to install a mode of training adapted to the socio-economic environment.

The objectives may be grouped into three categories: those related to the exercise of an occupation, those related to personal development and those related to the institutional forms of training.

In the first case, in addition to the acquisition of precise know-how, the providers of training express the success of their activities in terms of: learning to learn, to be enterprising, to resolve the problems related to the employment market and the working of the companies.

In addition to this bedrock of knowledge, training is also expected to bring out qualities which are considered to be a part of personal well-being: self-confidence, a positive image of oneself; ability to communicate, negotiate, make a better analysis of one's own problems, work in synergy with one's environment.

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Lastly, training programmes are judged by the certificates which they award and by the access they enable to continuing training. Here, it is a question of relaunching a career, a professional future which was blocked up to then, or of encouraging mobility.

- C o n c l u s i o n -

By requesting CEDEFOP to embark on the task of evaluation of training for women, the EC Commission induced it to apply its know-how in a highly specific situation.

In the 1980s training schemes for women were justified by the threat or the fact of unemployment which affected women more than men. Because they lacked technical skills women remained on the margin of technological progress. And, in any case, the companies did not base their development on their training. As the author of a recent study on the "Women-Technologies" binomial requested by the Commission wrote, women are the "feeble part" of the companies. Under these circumstances, the evaluation of training for women would not attain its full sense unless it were re-located within the context of the evaluation of training activities as a whole.

During the 1980s training for women inside and outside the companies was too inadequate in quantity and quality to respond to demand in an even remotely coherent manner. The field of evaluation is narrow. It is necessary to compare the obtained results with other results and to place the conclusions drawn from evaluations of pilot schemes within the overall context of evaluation of the normal courses offered in vocational training.

Thus, as far as CEDEFOP is concerned, its initial studies will lead it to open up a new field of work on evaluation where individual cases will be studied within a general context.

In order to do this, without relapsing into the illusion which leads to the belief that the whole answer to the questions of evaluation lies in a scientific approach modelled on the exact sciences, it is necessary to have comparable, sex-differentiated data in the field of vocational training. Through its work on the financing of vocational training, the Centre is examining these basic elements. The statistical approach and the qualitative case-study approach are complementary to one another.

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A striking fact which emerged is that the persons interviewed by CEDEFOP within the context of its work on women only partially apply mathematical evaluation techniques to define the cost-effectiveness ratio. Are they placing themselves in a perspective of change rather than control? Without falling into the trap of thinking that vocational training is always a better solution than unemployment and that the latter per se justifies training at any cost whatsoever, it should be underlined that the analysis of the cost-effectiveness ratio is usually a part of the control logic: it is necessary to render account. If one can prove through intricate formulas that three months of training at a specific level of qualification costs less than the amount paid during the same period to a person at the same professional level, then this is certainly an indispensable argument, but it should be placed within a larger configuration of questions.

Also, for women:

- training, in a company, mostly represents a form of selection; what are the effects of the selective approach on the "collective group" of women in the company?

- training implies occupational integration; to what extent have new jobs been envisaged and are the male colleagues prepared to work with women on an equal footing?

- training provides a better basis for inter-company and intra-company mobility; what validation is envisaged so that women can find a job outside the company which has trained them?

- apart from the necessity of earning a living, is there a "future" for women in the post-1992 world of work? Will they be full partners within the company?

- can training be something other than an assimilation force: i.e. the means to "enter" the labour market and function well there? Will women have no other choice, as in the past, but to adapt themselves and conform to its laws and demands?

Can the shortage of manpower forecast by some not be the opportunity to create new areas of negotiation: training, yes. employment, yes, but not at the cost of the multiple possibilities of intervention in their content, their significance, their organization. The advances in equal opportunity awaited by many women should lead to a different society.

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GUIDE FOR THE DESIGN OF AN EVALUATION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Phase I: Answer the strategic questions of evaluation

WHO ASKS WHOM FOR AN EVALUATION?

The funding body? The providing body? The evaluator?

TO DO WHAT?

To define the logic(s) of the USE of evaluation

Economic logic: evaluation should serve to
- control the use of grants?
- obtain additional grants?

If yes, what are the criteria applied by the funding authorities to apply control?
what documents have to be supplied?

Logic of SOCIAL CHANGE: should evaluation serve to
- obtain useful information to define training policies?
- participate in the definition of training policies?

Logic of INTERNAL FUNCTIONING: should evaluation be a process of aid for the decisions accompanying the project?

if yes, what questions should it answer?
what presence in the field is contemplated?
what accompanying approach is contemplated?

Logic of PEDAGOGICS:
Is an evaluation of the skills acquired by the trainees envisaged?

if yes, who is responsible for this evaluation?
are the trainers trained for evaluation?
do the trainees participate in this evaluation
and in the construction of evaluation tools?

Phase 2: Establish the budget allocated to evaluation

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Phase 3: Answer practical questions

Against the background of the selected logics and the priorities accorded to each one of them, and the grants earmarked for evaluation, answer the following questions:

EVALUATE WHAT?

1. The problem categories of the programme
   What economic reasons were given to justify the training?
   What reasons related to the emancipation of women were given to justify the training?

2. The objectives of the programme
   What are the objectives of training?

   - for women, in terms of
     * ability to exercise an occupation
     * personal development
     * the training path

   - for the training agency, in terms of
     * economics
     * the development of practical methods and increase of knowledge

   - for the companies, in terms of
     * economics
     * development and improved functioning of the firm

   - for the partner organizations in training, in terms of
     * economics
     * development

   - for society as a whole, in terms of
     * social change

   How do the objectives evolve?

3. Training activities

   What type of training
   - leading to qualifications?
   - for personal development?

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What methods of work
- individualization
- small group?
- large group?
- in-company training periods?

What teaching tools?

What teaching staff?

What trainee participation?

What evaluation of acquired skills?

What structures for placement, job-seeking, guidance, social and family aid,...

4. The organization of the programmes

Geographical location?

Organization in time?

Venues of training?

Management of financial resources?

Management of human resources?

Management of information and communication?

Arrangements for child care?

5. Relations with the environment

What policy of access to training?

What collaboration with other agencies?

What accompanying committee?

What relations with the companies?

What political, social, economic context?

6. The teaching staff

Number of teachers?

Skills of the trainers?

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What ratio of men to women?

What type of teaching teams (tutors, steering group, multi-disciplinary team?)

What climate of work?

What status, what employment contracts?

What prospects?

7. The target groups for training

Age-groups?

Situation in relation to employment?

Family situation?

Skills or qualifications at the start?

Attitudes to training?

Attitudes of the social environment (family, group) to training?

8. Evaluation

What request to whom?

What evaluation logic? Why?

What participation of whom in evaluation?

What fields of research selected?

What evaluation strategies?

Who uses the results of evaluation?

What satisfaction with respect to evaluation?

9. The results of the programme

What are the results obtained (quantitative and qualitative)

- for women, in terms of
  * ability to exercise an occupation
  * personal development
  * the training path

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- for the training agency, in terms of
  * economics
  * the development of methods
  * the increase of knowledge

- for the companies, in terms of
  * economics
  * improved functioning of the firm

- for the partner organizations in training, in terms of
  * economics
  * development of methods, acquisition of knowledge.

What are the relations between the obtained results, the envisaged objectives and the expressed needs?

WHEN TO EVALUATE?

1. Before training starts?
2. During training?
3. When training ends?
4. After training?

HOW TO EVALUATE?

1. Contemplate what?
   - the logic of evaluation
   - the questions which evaluation must answer
   - the evaluation strategy
   - the presence of the evaluator
   - the documents produced for evaluation
   - the dissemination of the evaluation results

2. Collect data (which methods to be used?)

3. Analyse the data (what validity control to be applied?)

4. Communicate the results (to whom and how?).

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